

Mound Builder Indian Projects (Hopewell)

Grade Level: 3rd – 4th grades

The Hopewell or Mound Builders have left their mark on our state. Their burial mounds have been discovered all over the southern portion and left questions about these people and their culture. In these assignments, after children research mound building cultures and write a report, they simulate how a mound was prepared and excavated by either making a mound in a pan or making a delicious treat – a cake.

1. Mound in a Pan (may be done in small groups)

Materials Needed

- A kitty litter pan or something similar with an edge
- Small pieces of wood/leaves
- Soil
- Clay
- Small plastic skeletons from a variety store, a novelty store or from companies such as Oriental Trading Co.
- Grass seed (optional)
- Small 1/2 oz. containers to simulate the woven fiber baskets used for transporting soil
- Other artifacts – see below

Directions

Have a small group work on this project. Make a small rectangle of clay on the bottom center of the pan. The Hopewell people then covered it with logs or branches. Next the body was laid on the branches. The deceased also had his/her treasures (artifacts) buried with him/her. There could be small clay pots that the children make, arrowheads, animal bones, grizzly bear teeth, shells from the ocean, obsidian, mica, copper and silver added to the burial site. Then more branches or logs would be placed over the deceased. Finally, have the group add soil, one small container at a time to show how time-consuming and how much labor it took to make a mound. It is thought that each load that the mound builders carried was about 25 pounds. By putting a large bag of soil at a distance from the pan, the children should see how much work was involved. Finally, to duplicate what mounds look like today, grass seed and tree seed could be added to the top for a more realistic picture. Water sparingly.

2. Mound Chocolate Cake

Directions

1. Spray Pyrex container and flour it for ease in removal.
2. Make a chocolate cake in a Pyrex, dome-shaped bowl.
3. Items such as marshmallows, M&Ms, raisins, and nuts, may be added to the mixture before baking to represent various artifacts.
4. Once the cake is baked, remove from the Pyrex container, and cool.
5. Add frosting and coconut tinted with green food coloring to simulate grass.
6. Enjoy.

**Carol VanEck – Odyssey 2000 Award Winner
Grand Rapids Public Schools**